

# November 14, 2005

Mary L. Cottrell, Secretary Department of Telecommunications and Energy One South Station, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Boston, MA 02110

Re: DTE 05-GAF-P4

**Dear Secretary Cottrell:** 

On behalf of Fitchburg Gas and Electric Light Company d/b/a Unitil ("Unitil"), this letter responds to the Department of Telecommunication and Energy's request, set forth in D.T.E. 05-GAF-P4 at page 8, to advise the Department by November 15, 2005, of all measures taken to affirmatively inform customers of certain information including: (1) information concerning the Gas Adjustment Factor ("GAF") and residential budget billing; (2) applicable deadlines and procedures to apply for federal fuel assistance funds; and 3) encouraging all customers to utilize energy conservation programs offered by Unitil.

As discussed below, Unitil is taking several measures to affirmatively communicate this information to our customers.

#### **Direct Mail**

Letters will be mailed directly to all residential customers, not currently enrolled in the budget billing plan, informing them of the opportunity to enroll in the budget billing plan, or to establish a payment arrangement. All letters will be customized to include their calculated budget amount and will be mailed to customers on or before Friday, November 18th.

Also, throughout the moratorium, payment reminder letters will be sent to all protected customers and welcome packets will be sent for new customers providing them information about the budget billing plan, payment arrangement opportunities, federal fuel assistance information with applicable application deadlines and energy conservation information.

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# Billing Inserts

Further customer outreach efforts include information in our bill inserts. The October bill insert provided information to customers to help them prepare for winter and the impact of rising costs. We alerted customers of the upcoming rate increases, what Unitil is doing to moderate costs and measures customers can use to also moderate their own costs. The November bill insert, "Take Control of Your Energy Costs," provides a step by step guide for customers to save on energy due to the high commodity costs this winter. The insert provides specific language for each of the following; Your Bill, Your Energy Usage, Energy Efficiency Programs, Payment Plans, Federal Fuel Assistance, Discount Rates, Good Neighbor Energy Fund and the Top 10 Ways to Save Energy. Unitil's December bill insert will also include further energy saving tips, low income eligibility, federal fuel assistance, budget billing opportunities and payment arrangement information.

# **Bill Messages**

Unitil will also provide information to customers in the form of bill statement messages customized by rate class. Unitil's November bill message for residential customers is as follows:

Due to rising world energy costs, beginning November 1, 2005, and continuing until April 30, 2006, your cost of gas will increase from \$1.1843 per therm to \$1.2709 per therm. If your bill contains any gas usage prior to November 1, your cost of gas will reflect pricing from both periods. The cost of gas is a straight pass through on which Unitil makes no profit. Due to an increase in recoverable operating costs, the Distribution Adjustment Factor will increase from \$0.0011 per therm to \$0.0249 per therm. We encourage you to consider budget billing as a means to manage your bill payments. For more information please visit us online at <a href="https://www.unitil.com">www.unitil.com</a> or call our Customer Service Center.

December's bill messages will be used to remind customers of all the measures they can take to help mitigate the high commodity costs and will direct them to sources that contain the specific information such as other bill inserts, the company's website, or the call center.

# **Media and Events**

In anticipation of high energy costs, Unitil has placed several articles in the media as well as conducted community outreach.

In August, an Op Ed piece entitled Controlling Energy Costs by Unitil CEO Robert Schoenberger appeared in the Worcester Telegram & Gazette, Fitchburg Sentinel and Enterprise, Lunenburg Ledger, and Gardner News. A follow up Op Ed piece has run in the Fitchburg Sentinel and Enterprise, the Nashoba Publications (weekly newspapers in North Central Mass) and the Gardner News.

Unitil has been interviewed on radio station WEIM's morning talk show on October 4th, 12th and 18th and will return again on December 1st. Another interview is scheduled for January 2006.

Unitil conducted an Energy Forum with the United Way of North Central Massachusetts, attended by over 40 agency and community leaders. The event was taped and broadcast on seven different occasions on Fitchburg's Community Access television station, FATV, and is planned for an additional two broadcasts on November 26th and 27th. The tape was also given to Leominster Access television (Leominster and Lunenburg viewers) and Ashburnham/Westminster Access. Additionally, a press release on the event was distributed October 28th.

FATV also taped an Energy audit of a Fitchburg resident's home, and the results will be broadcast in the next month. In January, FATV will interview Unitil about controlling energy costs.

### Web and Music on Hold

Finally, all information sent to customers in all of the above mentioned forms, will be provided on Unitil's web site, in music on hold messages, and conveyed by our customer service representatives during all customer inbound or outbound interactions.

Please do not hesitate to contact me directly if you have any questions or concerns about this matter.

Singerely

Gary Eple

cc: Carol Pieper, Hearing Officer

Kevin Brannelly, Director, Rate and Revenue Requirements

George Yankos, Director, Gas Division

Karen Robinson, Director, Consumer Division